

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

BY CHRISTINE FABER CHAPTER V.

A most stylish equipage was in waiting at the depot for Miss Brower, and her trepidation when, having descended from the train she knew not which direction to pursue, was quickly allayed by the appearance of a servant in livery, who seemed to single her out by intuition. Ascertaining that she was Miss Brower, he informed her that Mr. Tillotson's carriage was in waiting.

She entered it, and adjusted herself to the soft white cushions with a delightful sense of rest. This luxury seemed to her to be her right; she remembered when a very little girl riding with her father through the streets of Boston in just such a handsome turnout, and she put up a little grateful sigh that she was about to be permitted, for a brief time at least, the enjoyment of those things which her heart so craved.

The carriage howled along the handsomest of the city streets, and Helen was in an ecstasy of admiration; she thought of the little village of Eastbury, which she had left as a prison from which she had been released, and not even the remembrance of the true, faithful heart there waiting for her had power to brighten the gloomy colors with which her imagination painted the obscure New England village.

The house before which the carriage stopped surprised her a little by its size and somewhat old-fashioned exterior; evidently it had not youth of which to boast, but it had a commodiousness and elegance of structure quite wanting in some of its newer neighbors. Within there reigned also an old-fashioned but substantial magnificence; indeed, a stranger would be refreshingly pressed by the sense of comfort rather than style that everywhere met one. Modern appointments where they did not secure ease were quite ignored, while old-fashioned arrangements of the same were conducted to comfort, were in prominent use.

With her natural innate refinement, Helen understood and appreciated the delicacy that had her shown immediately to her room with a request that she should rest after her journey before meeting the family. There was a maid, however, in attendance, and a very tempting repast was brought to her, but she was too delightfully excited to partake of the delicacies, or to sleep when, having removed her traveling bed; still she closed her eyes and tried to rest, for she knew how indispensable it is to keep wrinkles away from the face.

She had shaken out her clustering curls, and now as she threw her arms up and crossed them over her head, her engagement ring came into sharp contact with her temple. With an impatient exclamation she flung her arms down and sat up in the bed. The maid, supposing the young lady would sleep, had left the room. She twisted the gemmed circlet about her finger, pulled it half way off, then thrust it back, again twisted it about her finger, and finally drew it off.

"They might not be so interested in me," she said to herself, "if they thought I was already engaged to be married, and it won't hurt Gerald to leave off his ring a little while; he'll never know, of course, that I did such a thing."

eyes of Mr. Phillips turned frequently to her with undisguised admiration, and Helen's vanity was abundantly fed by such flattering notice.

The blushes caused by her own vain consciousness had not ceased to burn upon her cheeks when the ladies returned to the parlor, leaving the gentlemen to their coffee and cigars; and Mary Tillotson, the elder of the sisters, clasping Helen's sylph-like waist, said, warmly: "I feel as if we had lost much in not knowing you before. Papa often spoke of you and as often regretted that circumstances which he could not control prevented your visiting us; now, however, we must make up for lost time by endeavoring to win your affection as rapidly as you are winning ours. Must we not, Annette?" addressing her sister, who, accompanied by Mrs. Tillotson, was advancing to them.

Annette, for answer, kissed Helen's cheek, and Miss Tillotson continued: "On account of your mourning, we must forego the pleasure of your company to large assemblies, but apart from that there will be much to amuse and interest you. You know that Annette and I are to be married on the same day, just two months from to-morrow; but the weddings are to be very quiet; we are all so averse to much display; and directly after we are going West for a few weeks. When we return we shall form our plans for the future; by that time, however, you shall have some opportunity to know and I trust, to love us."

The parlor door at that moment opened, and Mr. Tillotson, accompanied by Mr. Phillips, entered. What was there about Mr. Phillips, especially about his straight, dignified and graceful carriage, which seemed so strangely familiar to Helen! The same inexplicable familiarity had impressed her on his introduction to her, but in a less degree, and she was puzzled and annoyed by her efforts to explain it to herself. Mr. Phillips, however, was approaching for the purpose of speaking to her, and as Mr. Morgan and Mr. Scottfeld, the two suitors of the Misses Tillotson, were announced, Helen was left for a few moments to the respectful attentions of Mr. Phillips.

Nothing could be more flattering than the manner with which he addressed her, the graceful address with which he drew out her conversational ability, and the skill with which he himself conversed. She was flattered, charmed, and sorry when they were interrupted for the purpose of introducing her to the two young men.

The hours of that evening went far too rapidly for the fair guest, and it was with a head dizzy with gratified vanity that she entered her room to retire.

She would not dismiss the maid at once, as she wanted to do and might have done without any detriment to her night toilet—having been obliged to wait upon herself since her father's reverse in fortune—lest the woman might infer that she was not accustomed to such attendance. So she patiently bore the tedium of Jennie's ministrations and was busy with her own whirling thoughts the while.

When at length she was alone she said to herself: "I promised Gerald to write to him the very first night of my stay here, and I suppose I must keep my word, for there is nothing he detests like broken promises and untruths. Thank heaven, I haven't to write to Barbara; she gave me a week."

She went to her trunk and took out the little traveling case well supplied with writing materials—Gerald's gift to her before her departure—and dashed off a few hurried lines in which she made much of her fatigue, a great deal of the kindness of the Tillotsons, but not one word of Mr. Phillips. It ended with— "Your own Helen."

Brower is and what she says about me?"

It was Barbara's voice again, and Barbara's black eyes were turned in an awful look on Gerald's face. There was another who was looking at Gerald—Mildred, who had lifted her head suddenly at the sound of Miss Brower's name, and whose clear, gray eyes looked as if they would pierce him through. But no one saw the look, for it only lasted an instant.

Thurston's brow clouded. "If the letter should be from Miss Brower, and if it should contain any message for you, you shall certainly receive such; but I presume whatever Miss Brower has to say to you will be conveyed in a letter to yourself."

"Not necessarily," said Barbara dryly. "When people are lovers, it's irksome to write to a third party." "Confound the woman! Does she mean to parade our affairs before these people?" thought Gerald. But he restrained the somewhat angry retort which rose to his lips, and continued his supper.

In his room he tore open the letter and read with a pang of disappointment its meagre contents; they seemed so cold to one of his impassioned temperaments, and despite the excuse which he sought to make for them by believing all Helen said, and that lady slightly flushed when she saw it, but she did not push it away; neither did she look across to the little old man, who had confidently expected at least a glance of gratitude.

CHAPTER VII. Never was there more to turn the head of a vain young beauty than the attentions with which circumstances had conspired to surround Miss Brower. Everything that could minister to taste as exquisite as was her own, and everything that could ponder to her inordinate love of luxury, was in this new and delightful life with the Tillotsons, and though debarred from mingling in large assemblies, there was, as Miss Tillotson had said, so much besides to interest and amuse her, that Helen did not feel as if she had any deprivation. Every day there was a visit to some place of interest, or a delightful drive through the charming suburbs of the city, or a very entertaining visit to the house of some friend; then there were always agreeable guests to meet, and the beautiful young orphan continued to receive her full meed of admiration; even the servants were loud in praise of the gentle, soft spoken young creature, who, while she held her own in assumptions that were likely to make them think that she was not unaccustomed to her present grandeur, was at the same time careful to give no unnecessary trouble.

Mr. Phillips, however, was the one who most ministered to her vanity and love of admiration. Though thirty years her senior, he had preserved all the grace of his early manhood—a grace which, heightened now by the dignity of mature age, at once distinguished him wherever he appeared. His interest in Helen seemed to increase as the days went on, and the young girl, gratified by an attention which was so flattering, so one of her nature, and dazzled by thoughts of his wealth, which she had ample evidence to know was immense, succumbed to the influence of her vain and fickle heart; so that it came to be conceded to Mr. Phillips his right to constitute himself Miss Brower's attendant upon every occasion, and more than one private conversation regarding the matter was held by Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson.

"I am not to Gerald," Helen said, indignantly, to herself one morning, when, with Gerald's newly received letter open upon her lap, her conscience reproached her more sharply than usual. "Mr. Phillips has not yet proposed," she continued, "and I don't know that he will ever do such a thing, at least to me,"—in her secret heart she knew that he had been very near it the evening before,—and it is no harm for me to enjoy myself now; I am only here six weeks, and in a few more I shall have to go back to Eastbury and Barbara Balk, and all the other disagreeable things. Dear me! what harm can it be if I do flirt for a little while? and after Gerald and I are married I'll tell him all about it, and he'll forgive me then. Poor Gerald! how he loves me," and she took up and kissed the letter in which the ardent young fellow had poured forth his feelings so passionately. "He complains here," she soliloquized again, "of the meagre contents of my letters. Well, I must contrive to say a little more to him."

But, notwithstanding her resolution, she wrote very little more in her next letter than she had been accustomed to write; and as usual she did not say one word of Mr. Phillips. Though she had written regularly to Gerald every week, she had not once mentioned Mr. Phillips' name. She had interlarded her letters with verbose accounts of Mr. Morgan and Mr. Scottfeld, the betrothed of the Misses Tillotson, and of other transient guests of the Tillotsons, but of him of whom in common mercy to her lover she should have written, she said not a word. And so careful was she to guard against the superscription on her letters to Gerald being seen, that she detained them until the very last of the night from the house, lest accident should reveal to any of the Tillotsons the fact that she had a masculine correspondent.

Of her letters to Miss Balk, she was not so careful; indeed, she had more than one sent the Tillotson ladies into paroxysms of mirth by her description of Barbara's oddities,

and according to the promise extorted from her by Miss Balk, she wrote every fortnight to that lady. At first her letters had been scanty and independent, with a vein of spiteful thanks for her release from such grim censorship; but after that they became more respectful, and even assumed what to another might have seemed a tone of regard. Barbara, however, was not imposed upon by the change; she pursued her lips and said to herself, as she read a second time Helen's last letter, "I wonder what game the miss is playing? She's up to something, or she'd never write like that to me. I said I wouldn't molest her while she's making this visit, even if it should take up a year, nor shall I; but when it's ended—"

Her thin lips came together with a snap, and her eyes looked savagely at the reflection of her own repulsive face in the glass opposite.

Almost at the same moment, in Mr. Tillotson's parlor, Mr. Phillips was bending over Helen's chair, and saying in low, thrilling tones: "Mr. Tillotson has promised to accord me an interview tonight concerning you, Miss Brower; in your orphanage I look upon you as my protector, and on the conclusion of that interview I shall seek you to say something which has trembled on my lips almost since the first evening I had the happiness of meeting you. You divine what it is, do you not?"

He bent so low that his breath fanned her forehead; but she, shrinking from him, almost covered in her chair, while a hot and painful blush suffused her face and she even on her neck through its filmy covering of white lace.

Regarding her agitation but as a result of the modesty with which he credited her, and that made her so charming in his eyes, he bent lower still and said, with an exquisite blending of respect and tenderness in his tones: "I shall not further disturb you, Miss Brower, by pressing for your answer now; the subject has come too suddenly upon you, I see; but when I have concluded my interview with Mr. Tillotson, I shall seek you. Farewell for a brief space, Helen."

It was the first time he had addressed her by her Christian name, and it made her heart palpitate with sickening speed.

He sought Mr. Tillotson, and immediately withdrew with that gentleman to the library.

"In my impetuosity," he began, as soon as the door was closed upon them and they were seated, "I spoke to Miss Brower, to prepare her for my proposal, but the subject seemed to agitate her so much that I deferred it, according to my first intention, until I should have had my interview with you."

Tillotson did not reply; instead he covered his face with his hands and seemed to be in grave and even painful thought, while Phillips regarded him with an earnest and somewhat anxious look. At length he looked up.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE SPRING OF THE YEAR

By Helen Mortariety "Queer old houses over there, aren't they?" "Yes, it reminds one of an old-fashioned village street, don't you think?"

"Where the houses are all set in a row, and the women all come out in sunbonnets, and there are hollyhocks in the side yards—"

"Oh! the man broke in," now your extra vivid imagination is running away with you. Hollyhocks in April!"

"If I imagine anything, can't I imagine June?" the girl retorted gaily. "There are hollyhocks, and a pretty girl in a pink sunbonnet, and a gallant somewhere about—"

"And there he is!" They both burst into a merry laugh as the front door of one of the houses opened and an old man stood there looking out into the street.

"Well, I dare say he was a gallant once," the girl said more soberly. "Poor old man, it's dreadful to be old in the Spring, isn't it?" And as they walked on, lighthearted and careless, their happy voices floated across the street to where the old man stood, watching them as they went. "Ha!" he chuckled, "even if the sun wasn't so warm, I'd know it was the Spring of the year—the Spring of the year!" He turned back into the room, closing the door over to a small stove in the corner before which a big armchair was comfortably disposed. He held his knotted old fingers out to the genial warmth, smiling a little, his thoughts still on the man and girl across the street, whose gay voices had come to him like an echo of the past. He seated himself rather stiffly in the chair and began to poke at the fire, a musing expression in his faded old eyes. "The Spring of the year," he murmured. "Ha! it was some such day as this. . . I mind when Polly and I drove over from her mother's to see the house. . . I'd finished it the week before, I had, and she hadn't seen it yet. She liked it all, and she was mighty hard to please, Polly was, at that. Just as quick as the wind. . . and as fresh as a daisy. . . and as gay as day, it seems like only the other day—"

Fifty or sixty years ago Long Street was not such an extensive thoroughfare as it is now, and a mile

or so from High Street it became a country road, pleasant in summer with its fringe of maple trees and hazel bushes, but knee deep in mud in the winter time. Judson Reilly, whose people lived out near Big Walnut, had come into Columbus to try his fortune the Spring he was eighteen, and he had walked all the way in, carrying his clothes swung over his shoulder on the end of a stout hickory stick. It was a warm day, but the walk was nothing to the country boy, who paused at the junction of two outlying streets and looked about him. Some ambitious projector had laid them out as streets, but they were to all intents and purposes still the country, with the sun dappled blandly on the green fields and birds calling to each other from tree and bush. A monster elm nearby took Judson's eye, and he said to himself: "That's where I'd build me a house if I had the money; always did like an elm tree. And though town life altered Judson's views in many other ways, his first idea about a home near the elm tree somehow stayed with him."

For two years he clerked in a general store on Water Street, then he set up for himself in a small way, and then— he met Polly Somers, pretty, independent, imperious Polly, who brought butter and eggs to his store every week. The Patrick Somers farm lay about three miles northward of Columbus, and it was not long until Judson was a regular Sunday visitor at the comfortable homestead, and almost—but not quite—the accepted suitor of Polly. For the girl was very popular, and other suitors there were who had holdings of more or less extent and value, and homes to take her to, but Judson lived in a dingy room over his little store and took his meals at the Widow Brown's on Fourth Street. Polly was doubtful about this. Would he expect her to live there if she married him, she wondered? Wherefore she was elusive, and variable as to temper, and altogether led the slower Judson a trying chase.

One day there was an extra churning and Polly decided to take the butter to town at once. She needed some calico for a new dress, and besides she wanted to see Judson to make up for her chill treatment the last time he was out. That the horses were all busy in the fields daunted her not a bit once she had made up her mind; for what was a matter of three miles to a vigorous girl of eighteen? but as it happened she did not have to walk all the way in, for shortly a neighbor came along and gave her a lift to the edge of the town. Here she was set down among some unfamiliar streets, and making her way to one of the main arteries, she turned into Long Street at Tenth.

"Why, Polly!" some one said, and there was Judson leaning on the fence and looking as though he owned the universe, as Polly told him later. "Why, Judson Reilly, what are you doing here?" "Oh, just looking about my place," Judson answered casually. Polly dropped her basket. "Your place?" "Yes. Won't you come in and see it?" "What's the gate?" with a mischievous glance. "They had resumed their old pleasant relations by the time a couple of fence rails had been removed and Polly was walking about the field with Judson, admiring the location and listening to him expiate on its good points. "And here," he said, coming to the elm tree, "is where I'm going to build—our house."

"What?" And Polly looked up at him startled. "Our house, Polly," he repeated, more firmly this time. "Yours and mine, right here with the elm at the side—"

"Oh, Judson," the girl broke in involuntarily, "then I won't have to live over the store after all?" Later they both laughed over this naive admission, but just then they were too preoccupied with the present. It was very pleasant under the elm tree that lovely warm April day. Robes innumerable, bent on their own home-building, sang in the branches above or hopped fearlessly about the lovers, while the sparrows chattered noisily, and the blue birds, brilliant in their bright coats, called raucously from bush and tree. All about violets were peeping from the grass, "Johnny jump-ups," Judson called them, as he picked a bunch for Polly to fasten in the belt of her purple calico dress; and there were other little Spring flowers whose names they did not know, but which bloomed sweetly about these two planning so happily and confidently a long life together.

"It won't take long to build the house," Judson said, "and we'll be married the last of May. I'll speak about it to Father Edward right away."

And Polly assented dreamily, and much delightful planning ensued. Judson always remembered that day of wonder and enchantment, as also the day when he brought Polly over to see the new house, put up in four weeks by Judson himself and a carpenter friend of his. It was a story and a half frame with two front doors, one with a natty portico, "the Sunday door," Polly said, and was other for "every day wear," and was so substantially built that fifty-four years later it was still standing; but no such far-off fugitive years beckoned to Polly that day as she danced through the echoing rooms, approving everything, charmed with every thing.

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